



Warm Weather Venison Handling for Optimal Meat Safety

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MADISON – Forecasters predict relatively warm high temperatures throughout Wisconsin for this weekend’s opening to gun deer hunting season, which is cause for concern for food safety officials when it comes to venison handling.

“When temperatures are above 40 degrees, harmful bacteria can grow quickly, so we want to make sure that hunters are clear about how to keep their harvest fresh and wholesome,” said Cindy Klug, manager of the Bureau of Meat Safety and Inspection for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Klug offers the following important tips to ensure your venison doesn’t spoil before you have the chance to enjoy it.

In the field

- Field dress the carcass immediately after harvest.
- Wash the body cavity with cold, clean water, if possible, and be sure to carry a clean towel for wiping your hands to prevent cross-contamination.
- Place the heart and liver in a food-grade plastic bag if you wish to keep them.
- Spread the rib cage to cool the carcass more quickly. Better yet, pack the carcass with clean ice.

Transporting it home

- Do not leave venison or other wild game in a car trunk where warmer temperatures promote bacterial growth.
- Register and process your deer as soon as you possibly can. Let the registration station know if you intend to donate your harvest to the “charitable venison program.”
- Call ahead to a licensed meat plant for processing.

Back home

- Refrigerate the carcass if at all possible. Avoid hanging it in your garage without refrigeration in warm weather.
- Use food quality plastic bags or buckets to store cut meats. Do NOT use dark-colored garbage bags as they may contain toxic resins and are not intended for food use.

“The biggest mistake we see each year is that hunters hang their deer in the garage for too long thinking that the garage gets cold enough, but temperature fluctuations are not good for keeping meat safe to eat,” Klug said.

For more information about meat safety, visit datcp.wi.gov/food. You can also connect with us on Twitter at twitter.com/widatcp or Facebook at facebook.com/widatcp.

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